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## Motorcycle Police Debut in Lafayette

By Cathy Tyson

For the first time ever police on motorcycles will be out and about looking to enforce the rules of the road starting in early July. Will it take a flurry of tickets to persuade residents that it's time to put away the cell phone, buckle seatbelts and slow down?

Don't say you haven't been warned. Ensuring roadway safety and helping with traffic congestion - especially around schools and during commute hours, is their goal. These small, stealthy bikes can go where no cruiser has gone before - like the narrow winding roads of Happy Valley Road, Reliez Valley Road, and Springhill Road, along with Moraga Road and St. Mary's Road.

At a recent joint meeting of the Lafayette School District and the City Council, many parents spoke up in support of the motorcycles and are happy that they'll be making kids' commute to school safer.

Look for an enforcement program to be rolled out in September that targets traffic violations near all Lafayette schools.

City Manager Steven Falk explained the reasoning behind the motorcycle cops in his Friday Summary, "If the last ten years serve as an accurate guide, the chance that you will die in a traffic collision in Lafayette is five times higher than the chance that you will become a homicide victim, and you are twenty-six times more likely to be injured in a car crash than by an assault."

He continued, "Given Lafayette's limited funds, it is prudent to deploy resources where the risks are highest and where the money can make a meaningful difference. The numbers suggest that, despite the unpopularity of traffic tickets, the City's best strategy to prevent future deaths and debilitating injuries is to provide more and better enforcement."

The bikes are more economical to operate and maintain and get significantly better gas mileage than a traditional cruiser. Not just any officer can ride the new motorcycles; administrative regulations were recently adopted to govern the Police Motorcycle Unit (PMU). To be on the bike beat, ten years of law enforcement experience and a history of good customer service with the public are required. In addition, to ensure the safety of police officers motorcycles will not be ridden in rain, heavy fog or extremely cold or windy weather.

The Lafayette Police Department issues about 2800 citations per year - that number is likely to rise.

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[back](#)

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